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STATE FOR NEA/ARP (S. STEINGER), DRL (A. ANZALDUA) AND G/TIP  
STATE PASS USTR FOR J. BUNTIN, A. ROSENBERG, AND L. KARESH  
DOL FOR J. SHEA, B. SHEPARD, AND J. RUDE

E.O. 12958: N/A  
TAGS: [ELAB](#) [ETRD](#) [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [SMIG](#) [MU](#)  
SUBJECT: MINISTRY OF MANPOWER COMBATING TIP AND ILLEGAL  
IMMIGRATION

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Summary  
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¶1. (SBU) Minister of Manpower Juma bin Ali bin Juma highlighted for the Ambassador some of the challenges that his ministry faces in combating trafficking in persons (TIP), including a burgeoning sponsor system and registration of false companies. The Minister reiterated his commitment to combating trafficking, but said that more inspections, fingerprinting at the airport for laborers, and reorganization of the sponsorship system are needed to properly address and effectively oversee the importation and protection of expatriate labor. End Summary.

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Suggested TIP Actions for Oman  
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¶2. (U) In an August 21 meeting with Minister of Manpower Juma bin Ali bin Juma, the Ambassador underscored the TIP report's importance and suggested several steps that Oman could take to improve its ranking, such as passing specific anti-TIP legislation, creating an anti-trafficking intra-agency committee, launching an aggressive public awareness campaign, and supporting shelters already in operation. To aid these efforts, the Ambassador offered Embassy assistance in facilitating a visit by Omani officials to the U.S. to learn more about international techniques in identifying and protecting trafficking victims, as well as in investigating and prosecuting traffickers.

¶3. (U) Given the considerable size of the expatriate labor population in Oman, the Ambassador also noted that the Omani government should proactively address the alleged withholding of passports by employers. Although Omani courts have compelled employers in individual cases to return employee passports under Article 18 of the Basic Law, which notes that "personal freedom is guaranteed within the limits of the law," there is no law on the books expressly prohibiting the withholding of passports.

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Minister Committed to Combating TIP  
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¶4. (SBU) The Minister responded positively to the suggestions, and agreed that outreach and public awareness campaigns are vital components in educating both employers and employees on their rights and responsibilities. He also highlighted the government's commitment to combating TIP,

praising the Ministry of Sports for enforcing 2005 legislation that prohibits children under 14 (to be raised annually until reaching 18 years of age) from racing camels. The legislation has already had a significant impact, and recently resulted in the cancellation of a planned racing event.

¶5. (SBU) The Minister expressed his clear commitment to protecting workers, and described how he conducted his own inspections and reviewed weekly logs of calls made to the ministry's hotline. He groused, however, that the cumbersome sponsor system and the registration of false companies continue to present challenges for his limited staff. (Note: Once a company is registered with the Ministry of Commerce and Industry, unscrupulous agents are able to obtain labor clearances and import labor using the company's name. End Note.) The Minister suggested that more inspections, fingerprinting at airports for laborers, and stricter registration of companies would assist in his anti-trafficking efforts.

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Comment  
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¶6. (U) In FTA-related news, the Minister was very pleased with the recent passage of the U.S.-Oman Free Trade Agreement. He said he expects implementing legislation to be completed by the end of September, well ahead of the U.S. congressional deadline of October 31.  
GRAPPO